

INTRODUCTION OF UKRAINE
ELECTIONS RESOLUTION**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, as Chairman of the Helsinki Commission I rise to introduce a concurrent resolution which addresses the current political uncertainty in Ukraine, a country of strategic importance to the United States. My resolution urges all sides to abide by the agreement signed by Ukraine's leadership on May 27th, providing for a new round of parliamentary elections to be held on September 30th, and encouraging the holding of these elections in a free, fair and transparent manner in keeping with Ukraine's commitments as a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I have just returned from Ukraine which hosted the 16th annual Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE. While in Kyiv, I met with President Yushchenko and other prominent Ukrainian officials. My colleagues and I received assurances from Kyiv that Ukraine would not backtrack on the path to political reform and good governance.

Ukraine's current political conflict is the result of the ongoing power struggle that President Viktor Yushchenko and Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich have been engaged in since Yanukovich became Prime Minister last August. Rooted in hastily conceived constitutional reforms, the ongoing power struggle threatens to undermine Ukraine's hard-fought and substantial democratic gains, especially those won since the 2004 Orange Revolution.

On April 2nd, President Yushchenko issued a decree dissolving the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament, asserting that the Prime Minister was attempting to monopolize power by forming a veto-proof parliamentary majority through illegal means, and called for new parliamentary elections. The parliament refused to disband and questioned the legality of the presidential decree. After several weeks of tension and standoff, violence was averted and an agreement was reached: President Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yanukovich and Parliamentary Speaker Moroz came together in support of holding pre-term parliamentary elections at the end of September.

Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that Ukraine has made genuine democratic gains since the Orange Revolution. The December 2004 presidential vote was hailed as a stirring example of the triumph of peaceful protest and democratic ideals. Just over a year ago, as head of the OSCE-led International Election Observation Mission to Ukraine, I was pleased to declare that country's parliamentary elections were also free and fair. I am pleased that Ukraine has once again invited the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe the September 30 elections. Moreover, Ukraine for the last two years has been designated by Freedom House as a "free" country, in contrast to the "partly free" assessment it held during its first 13 years of independence.

Nevertheless, democratic institutions and the rule of law in Ukraine are still emerging and lacking in their ability to safeguard democratic gains. It is this fragility, especially the

lack of constitutional clarity in delineating the separation of powers that made it possible for the power struggle to ripen into a full-blown political crisis in recent months. However, it is heartening to see that more serious turmoil was averted through careful and constructive dialogue and capped by an agreement involving the country's leading political figures.

First and foremost, my resolution calls for the leadership and political parties of Ukraine to abide by the May 27th agreement and conduct elections as scheduled for September 30th. The dispute between the president and prime minister must be resolved in a manner consistent with Ukraine's democratic values and national interest, and in keeping with its OSCE commitments.

Madam Speaker, prolonged political uncertainties regarding the government's delineation of powers is clearly not in Ukraine's interest, and that nation's political leaders need to stand together in support of free, fair and transparent elections as a way out of the current impasse. While democratic elections will not, in and of themselves, resolve all of the challenges facing Ukraine in strengthening the rule of law and delineating power among the branches of government, they are a critical stepping-stone in Ukraine's democratic consolidation and should serve as a further testament of Ukraine's commitment to a democratic future.

As this resolution underscores, Congress has been a staunch supporter of the development of democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law in Ukraine since the restoration of that nation's independence in 1991. The consolidation of democracy and the rule of law in Ukraine will further strengthen that country's independence and sovereignty, enhancing Ukraine's aspirations for full integration with the West and serving as a positive model for other former Soviet countries. I urge my colleagues to support this timely resolution as a demonstration of Congress's interest, concern, and support for the Ukrainian people.

HONORING ROBERT "BOB"
LAYHER OF HAYS, KANSAS

HON. JERRY MORAN

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, today I rise to express my admiration of a Kansan's life—a life filled with honor and service to country, community and family. Mr. Robert "Bob" Layher of Hays, Kansas, a member of the "Greatest Generation," lived life with integrity, passion and enthusiasm.

Like so many young Americans of his generation, Bob put country before self and joined the U.S. military. Bob proudly fought for freedom during World War II, though he began serving prior to the start of the war. He was among those who resigned their U.S. military positions in order to volunteer for a covert operation with the Chinese Air Force before the U.S. entered the war. For his service in China as a member of The Flying Tigers, Bob was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Bob's dedication to those he served with and his presentation of their memories was unsurpassed. While the history and service of

The Flying Tigers is well known in China, few in our country know about the courage and heroism of these men. Bob took a lead role in making certain that his community knew about The Flying Tiger's mission of protecting China's important Burma Road from Japanese attacks.

He was also involved in national education of The Flying Tigers. Appearing in stories and presenting at schools, he shared the history of this brave group of volunteers. During trips back to the area where they were stationed, members of The Flying Tigers found the need for education about their group was much less necessary in China. The idea that Americans would volunteer to defend another country all for the sake of freedom made a great impression on the Chinese.

While Bob was born and raised outside of Kansas, our State was lucky to have him settle here and begin farming after his military service. Bob was born in Dallas, Oregon, on September 3, 1916. He graduated from the University of Colorado where he also met his wife, Marian. In 1941, 4 days before he left for China, he and Marian were secretly married. This was also the same day as his birthday, so this way Bob would never forget their anniversary.

A very involved member of his community, Bob participated in several civic groups. After he moved to Hays in 1952, Bob became a member of the First Presbyterian Church and the Order of the Eastern Star. He was also a member of the ISIS Shrine and the Masonic Lodge in Salina.

Most important to Bob was his family. Over the course of their 65 years of marriage, he and his wife were committed parents and grandparents. Bob's son, R.F. "Bobby" Layher Jr., followed in his father's footsteps and served as a pilot with United States Marine Corps. Even though Bobby went on to be a civilian pilot with Federal Express for 29 years, Bob and his son were still able to fulfill their dream of farming together.

In the many important roles Bob filled in his life, he served out of a sense of duty and not out of selfish ambition. He helped make his community better and his nation safer. I join his many friends and admirers in paying tribute to a great man. My thoughts and prayers go out to Marian and her family during this time of loss.

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SHOREVIEW, MINNESOTA

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 23, 2007

Mr. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize the 50th anniversary of the city of Shoreview, Minnesota.

The area that is currently Shoreview served as home for members of Dakota and Ojibwe tribes more than 150 years ago. The abundant lakes and wetlands that attracted these first Americans still bring people to this beautiful community.

In 1850, Mr. Socrates A. Thompson ventured from Saint Paul in search of a good place to farm, settling in what is now part of Shoreview. Following Mr. Thompson, families